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Introduction

A Small Place, written by Jamaica Kincaid[1], a West Indian writer living in the US, belongs to her non-fiction prose: this generic crossing is indeed the first surprise the uninformed reader comes across when taking up the book. The second lies in the echoic discourse that Kincaid's prose is based on. It seems to present itself in the manner and style of a travel guidebook to the mesmerizing island of Antigua, directly addressed to the reader in the second person. But the echo soon becomes satirical as discursive twists push the reader to grasp Kincaid's "oppositional irony": more of an anti-travel guidebook, *A Small Place* is often disparaged as being "too angry"[2]. If animated by a rhetoric of anger, I would contend that Kincaid's forceful writing stops short of an excess of anger through a very controlled writing that keeps the reader from rejecting the book entirely while being severely put under attack. The purpose of this paper is to evince how she stylistically manages to back the reader into a corner without entirely antagonizing her; on the contrary, through a successful perlocutionary effect, she compels the reader to take a new footing and sensitively alter her ways of seeing colonial history. One of Kincaid's rhetorical strategies lies in her (meta) deictic use of personal pronouns performing ideological crossings and ironical reversals. Another incisive weapon that Kincaid makes an abundant use of here is negation: *A Small Place* is saturated with diverse negative forms that entertain with their positive counterparts both a satirical and paradoxical relationship.

1. The politics of deixis.

1.1. Through the looking glass

In the manner of the travel guidebook, the first lines of *A Small Place* seem to take the reader on a privileged trip to the exotic beauty of Antigua: "If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see". The second-person pronoun[3] refers to the implied, ideal reader that might be anyone willing to discover this "nine mile wide by twelve mile long" Caribbean island which became independent from the United Kingdom in 1981.

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[1] Elaine Potter Richardson changed her name to Jamaica Kincaid in order to be able to write about her past as a West-Indian Antiguan girl under British Rule. The change in names was a way for her "to do things without being the same person who couldn't do them—the same person who had all these weights" (see Garis).

[2] Richard Gottleib, the *New Yorker*'s editor of the 1980s rejected its inclusion in his magazine as "too angry" (Kincaid had become a staff worker for the *New Yorker* in 1976, her editorial work in other magazines having come to the attention of the *New Yorker*'s editor of the time: William Shawn).

[3] "You" here seems to embody "the Instructions and Guide Book you" prototype where "the actual addressee is described as doing things in a possible application of the instructions" (Fludernik 1993, 235). Kincaid seems indeed to describe the typical behaviour of the tourist: "you take a bath, you brush your teeth. You get dressed again; as you get dressed, you look out the window..." (12).

However, Kincaid evokes this generic intertext the better to deconstruct it[4]: the tone soon becomes accusatory. The reader is not invited but compelled to occupy the position of the potential tourist. The "you" is literally assigned a reading posture which it cannot escape, as the identification of the reader with the tourist is incessantly recalled: "since you are a tourist", "you are on holiday, you are a tourist", "you, the tourist". The second person has nothing of the "impersonal or generalized" pseudo-deictic *you* that can be found in proverbs for instance[5], its deictic reference is clearly delineated; it addresses the North American or European white tourist:

> You disembark from your plane. You go through customs. Since you are a tourist, a North American or European—to be frank, white—and not an Antiguan black returning to Antigua from Europe or North America with cardboard boxes of much needed cheap clothes and food for relatives you move through customs swiftly, you move through customs with ease. (4-5)

In unambiguously assigning placement, Kincaid brings to light that what we, white readers, perceive as the "universal", natural reference of "you" is in fact a clearly marked-out racial construction. By emphasizing the taken-for-granted reference, "Kincaid […] challenges the monolithic 'you' that implies a universal, deracinated, ideal construct" (Richardson 2006, 33).

In *A Small Place*, the readers, narratologically reduced to the class of "the tourist" (a distinct class determined by the definite article), are forced to face their reflection in the satirical mirror Kincaid is holding to them: "The thing you have always suspected about yourself the minute you become a tourist is true: the tourist is an ugly human being" (14). Uninterested in the historical context of the country they have alighted on, the tourists are here to satisfy their expectations of blue sky, cocktails and bathing in the bluest waters: "you see yourself taking a walk on that beach, you see yourself eating some delicious, locally grown food. You see yourself, you see yourself…". But Kincaid compels the reader to look through the narcissistic mirror and see what is on the other side of exotic beauty; not only is the food not local (or it might be but it has first transited through Florida) but the transparent water the tourist longs so much to bathe in may not have the purity she expects: "the contents of your lavatory might, just might, graze gently against your ankle as you wade carefree in the water, for you see, in Antigua, there is no proper sewage-disposal system" (14). The stereotyping of the tourist ("only a cliché can explain you", 15) is here a purposeful strategy designed to match the objectification the tourist usually subjects the native to. The tourist appropriates the site ("Oh, but you're tired of all this looking, and you want to reach *your* destination, *your* hotel, *your* room, 12, my emphasis), turning the native's miserable existence into "a source of pleasure"[6].

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[4] This is the principle of satire as studied by Paul Simpson. In his analysis of the discursive processes of satire, the author distinguishes two elements that correspond to two phases of irony: the first element called "the prime" constitutes an intertextual echo of some other discourse (this is the echoic irony phase), here it would be the discourse of the travel guidebook. The second structural element of satire called "the dialectic" is "text-internal"; it embodies "an opposing idea" that comes into conflict with the echoic discourse (this is the "oppositional irony" phase), here the stigmatisation of the tourist (Simpson 2003, 89).

[5] There is here complete agreement between the morphological form "you" and its deictic function (addressing) whereas "generalized you" tends to lose its "deictic force" (see Herman 1994).

[6] Despite the cliché symmetry she tries to re-establish here, Kincaid points out the inherent dissymmetry between the two parties. If the tourist is also a native from some place, the Antiguan tourist can hardly occupy the position of the tourist: "Every native would like to find a way out, every native would like a rest, every native would like a tour. But some natives—most natives in the world—cannot go anywhere. They are too poor. They are too poor to go anywhere. They are too poor to escape the reality of their lives;

Kincaid lends her voice to the natives, formulating what is usually kept silent for the sake of the tourist industry:

> it will never occur to you that the people who inhabit the place in which you have just paused cannot stand you, that behind their closed doors they laugh at your strangeness (you do not look the way they look); the physical sight of you does not please them; you have bad manners (it is their custom to eat their food with their hands; you try eating their way, you look silly; you try eating the way you always eat, you look silly); they do not like the way you speak (you have an accent); they collapsed helpless from laughter, mimicking the way they imagine you must look as you carry out some everyday bodily function. They do not like you. *They do not like me* (17).

In the virtual confrontation Kincaid performs between the tourist and the native, she presents herself as neither belonging to one party nor to the other ("*they do not like me*"). As an expatriate Antiguan working and living in the US, Kincaid can hold together two distinct ideological perspectives. She never allows the reader to fall back on her naturalised white way of reading and seeing. To do so, she often resorts to parentheses that clearly state from whose perspective the narrator is writing. This typographic sign that slows down the reading is indeed a way for Kincaid to insert a second voice inside the first voice: "And you look at the things they can do with a piece of ordinary cloth, the things they fashion out of cheap, vulgarly colored (to you) twine" (16), "they build enormous (for Antigua), ugly (for Antigua), concrete buildings in Antigua's capital, St John's" (11).

1.2. Shifting subject positions and deictic references

In *A Small Place*, Kincaid strategically uses personal pronouns to satirical ends. In his study of satirical discourse, Paul Simpson considers satire a discursive practice embodying three subject positions: A. the satirist (the producer of the text), B. the satiree (the addressee) and C. the satirised ("the target attacked or critiqued in the satirical discourse") (Simpson 2003, 8). In placing the reader in the stigmatized place of the tourist, Kincaid merges the place of the satiree (B) and that of the satirized (C), thus exposing herself to a possible rejection on the part of the addressee[7]. Yet the purpose of satire is here to invite the reader to take a distance from where she can take a renewed look at herself[8]. And paradoxically, in having the reader work through the ironical statements, *A Small Place* manages to bring closer together satirist and satiree[9], for as Elizabeth Black recalls "recognition of irony promotes solidarity" [10]. Solidarity is further encouraged in the second and third chapters as they present a shift in subject positions:

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and they are too poor to live properly in the place where they live, which is the place you, the tourist, want to go—so the natives see you, the tourist, they envy you, they envy your ability to leave your own banality and boredom, they envy your ability to turn their own banality and boredom into a source of pleasure for yourself" (18-19).

[7] Simpson contends that the closer the satiree is to the satirized, the more likely the satiree is either to not get the irony or to reject the satire completely: "The more closely situated someone is to the target of satire, the less likely or able they are to identify that target" (Simpson 2003, 173).

[8] For Simpson, that is the general purpose of satire: "What satire does is to invite the satiree to concur by reaching a synthesis that offers, in Popper's terms, a 'new way of seeing'" (Simpson 2003, 108).

[9] As Simpson puts it: "the relationship is such that 'successful' satire, in keeping with the general principle of humour delivery and reception, tends to 'shorten' the connection between positions A and B, thereby bringing these discursive positions closer together" (Simpson 2003, 87).

[10] "If we appreciate it we feel ourselves to be part of the 'in-group' addressed, and are therefore not only entertained, but flattered. It engages us more deeply in the text" (Black 2006, 119).

position C is there taken up by the English colonizers of the past (chapter 2) and the foreign investors and the corrupted Antiguan independent government of the present (chapter 3). In both chapters, the satirized is referred to with the personal pronoun "they", which tends to simultaneously shorten the bonds between narrator (*I*) and addressee (*you*) and lengthen the connection with target C.

The second chapter indeed relates the story of Kincaid's childhood in Antigua. The reader, still addressed as "you", is here assigned the position of the witness and writing companion: "let me tell you…" Kincaid recurrently says in the second chapter. The "I" of the first chapter shifts towards a collective reference: it morphs into an inclusive "we", forcing in-group consciousness on the reader. Adopting the viewpoint of the little girl during British colonization, Kincaid brings into focus the gap between the myth of the superior civilized English they were taught at school and the rude everyday behaviour of the colonizers:

> We felt superior to all these people; we thought perhaps the English among them who behaved this way weren't English at all, for the English were supposed to be civilised, and this behaviour was so much like that of an animal, the thing we were before the British rescued us, that maybe they weren't from the real England at all but from another England. (30)

Bonding with the narrator in the ironical reversal she effects, the reader cannot help but concur with Kincaid in her denunciation of the British colonisation. However, the narrator does not look for a mere approval from her reader, she seeks acknowledgment of responsibility and this is once more obtained through a deictic shift. Taken off guard again, apostrophic *you* returns on the enunciatory plane with a vengeance, no longer referring to the tourist or to the witness-reader but to all the British masters and all their descendants. The "they" of the English suddenly morphs into the "you" of the addressee, thus extending the reference of the second person addressee: "Even if I really came from people who were living like monkeys in trees, it was better to be that than what happened to me, what I became after I met you"(37)[11].

Personal pronouns in *A Small Place* have a reflexive critical function that could be called "metadeictic"[12]: through their unstable or shifting references, the pronominal triad (*I*/*you*/*they*) reflects on the general theme of the book. Here, in bluntly addressing the reader with the second person pronoun, Kincaid is performing what Brown and Levinson call a Face Threatening Act in their theory of politeness, impolitely impinging on the reader's territory and desire to be free from "imposition" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). Kincaid's narratological intrusion mirrors the impolite, undesired invasion of the English into native territory:

> Let me show you how you looked to us. You came. You took things that were not yours, and you did not even, for appearances' sake, ask first. You could have said, "May I have this, please?" and even though it would have been clear to everybody that a yes or no from us would have been of no consequence you might have looked so much better. Believe me, it would have gone a long way. I would have had to admit that at least you were polite. (34-35)

By using the same linguistic form ("you") to refer to the tourist and then to all white colonizers' descendants, she puts on a par past misdeeds and present consequences,

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[11] The second person belongs here to what Richardson calls "the autotelic" type, where "you" directly and continually addresses the reader but with a reference that can shift along the way. See for instance his analysis of Italo Calvino's *Se una note d'inverno un viaggiatore* (Richardson 2006, 30-36).

[12] The term "metadeictic" is here to be understood in a reflexive perspective, the use of deixis in the communicative context resonating at the level of the contents of the essay: the choice of deictic forms indeed mirrors Kincaid's global message.

thus rendering it impossible for the reader to disengage her responsibility from the past[13].

The third person plural pronoun referring to present-day Antiguans is also "metadeictic". In the third chapter, she blames post-independence Antiguans for passively accepting the place assigned to them by the modern version of colonization that is the tourist industry: "they say these things, pausing to take breath before this monument to rottenness, that monument to rottenness, as if they were tour guides; as if, having observed the event of tourism, they have absorbed it so completely that they have made the degradation and humiliation of their daily lives into their own tourist attraction" (68-69). As Benveniste puts it, excluded from the I/you discourse, the third person constitutes a "non-personne" (Benveniste 1966, 255-256)[14]. The use of "they" in the third chapter thus reflects present-day Antiguans' passive exclusion from a discourse that is taken place without them.

But Kincaid herself, having, as she says, "met the world through England", is "spoken" by a language that is not hers and that is yet her only means to express herself; the opposed points of view that she exposes can only be expressed in the (same) English language that will always favour one point of view against the other: "for isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak the crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? For the language of the criminal can contain only the goodness of the criminal's deed. The language of the criminal can explain and express the deed only from the criminal's point of view /…/ That must be why, when I say, 'I am filled with rage', the criminal says, 'But why?'"(32). Thus interpellated by a language that is not hers and that negates her rage, Kincaid's essay is underlain by a rhetoric of negation and negativity that we shall now turn to.

2. Negative and positive polarities

2.1. Satirical negation

Negation serves Kincaid's rhetoric of anger as regards the attitude of the white tourist. It enables her to attenuate the force of her attacks while paradoxically accentuating the strength of her satire. Combined with modalization, negation has indeed a devastating satirical effect: "and since you are on your holiday, since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live a day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought, and so has to watch carefully every drop of fresh water used […] must never cross your mind" (4). The obligation ("must never cross your mind") is expressed by the deontic modal "must" imposed on the tourist by the tourist herself: the latter must go on repressing these thoughts if she is to enjoy her holidays. But "must" can also here be interpreted epistemically, implying a certain judgment on the part of the narrator (of the type "this idea has certainly never crossed your mind"). In recurrently stating what the tourist should not do ("but you should not think of the confusion that must lie in all that…and you must not think of the damaged library", "it's better that you don't know that…"), the narrator contrariwise states what

[13] As Sabine Broeck puts it, "Kincaid's exhortation 'invites' us in no uncertain terms to cross the critical distance between a disinterested condemnation of colonialism and a recognition of our readerly self being implicated in white ethnocentric practices/habits/fantasies of control, ignorance, and wilful exercise of privilege" (Broeck 2002, 841-2).

[14] As Katie Wales underlines, Benveniste's account of the third person "underplays" its deictic force. The third party may be absent from the *I/you* discourse but still participates in it as listeners (Wales 2006, 22, 54). Here it could be said that potential Antiguan readers of *A Small Place* do participate in the dyad if only indirectly since they are excluded from the place of the "you" addressee.

they should be doing. Using a kind of preterition[15], the indirectness of Kincaid's negations are in fact more effective than direct reproach: this is part of the "meaning-making resource" of negation" (Nørgaard 2007, 49). Negation tends to foreground what is denied and thus to bring it into sharper psychological relief: the negated information is not discarded, it "is retained in the ongoing mental representation" (Nahajec 2009, 115[16]). Indeed rather than carrying on its function of negating, eliminating information, negation paradoxically forces the denied information onto the reader's mind: "you must not wonder what exactly happened to the contents of your lavatory when you flushed it. You must not wonder where your bathwater went when you pulled out the stopper. You must not wonder what happened when you brushed your teeth" (13-14). The reader can no longer pretend that what has been said has not been said except through a process of denegation which is precisely what Kincaid wants to denounce.

Negation has other satirical effects in *A Small Place*. Kincaid uses the whole gamut of negation, resorting to its multi-functionality to diverse effects. As a pragmatic device, negation hinges on a cooperative process between writer and reader as it "activate[s] implied rather than explicit meaning" (Nahajec 109). A negative evokes its positive counterpart at the moment it denies it; it presupposes its positive counterpart. Hence in the following example, the reader cannot not infer the implied meaning contained in the negation: "You disembark from your place. You go through customs. Since you are a tourist […] you move through customs swiftly, you move through customs with ease. Your bags are not searched" (4-5). Without saying it, Kincaid evokes the possibility of bags being searched: in the contrast she establishes between white tourists and Antiguans, we implicitly understand whose bags are usually searched. If negations express positive alternatives, positive statements also exploit the negative polarity. Kincaid gives vent to her denunciation by eliciting implied denials: in saying "if you were to ask why…" (7), she seems to imply the negative "but of course you don't/won't". She also plays on the expectation of the reader, leading her down a certain logical path before offering a twist that produces "contra-expectation"[17]. The following question "Have I given you the impression that the Antigua I grew up in revolved almost completely about England?" seems to announce a qualification, a rechanneling of the path taken so far by the narration. The answer defeats our expectation as it is met with a positive statement ("Well, that was so"). This dispreferred[18]/marked answer disrupting the reader's grammatical and semantic expectations has the effect of reinforcing all the more England's presence.

Negation also performs a conjoined effect with the numerous repetitions that characterise Kincaid's style. In the following example, negation performs oppositional irony. What is said is not the opposite of what is meant, as is traditionally said about irony, but it comments on the inappropriateness of the negated reality:

> The government built a refinery. Something went wrong. The refinery is rusting. The tanks are rusting. The platform is rusting. The foreigner who did the bad things in the Far East was involved in this. **He is not rusting**. He is very rich and travels the

[15] *Praeteritio* consists in speaking about something after saying one won't talk about it. Kincaid's *praeteritio* is somewhat reversed here: she says what she has to say and then only concludes that the reader should not give in to such thoughts.

[16] Nahajec draws here on the work of Giora, Balaban, Fein & Alkabets, "Negation as Positivity in Disguise", in H.L. Colston (ed). *Figurative Language Comprehension: Social and Cultural Influences*, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 233-55.

[17] Defined by Simpson (2003, 82) as what "cuts right across the fabric of the text that precedes it".

[18] On the contrary an unmarked or "preferred" answer is one that is expected, like an answer to a question, a greeting to a greeting, etc. (See Jeffries and McIntyre 2010, 102).

> world on a diplomatic passport issued to him by the government of Antigua. (67, my emphasis)

"He is not rusting" makes internal reference to the three "is rusting" that precede it, expressing by contrast an expectation that is not fulfilled: he should be rusting like the rest of the refinery left behind. Thus the negation does not play a simple descriptive role here. In using the same aspectual and verbal construction, the negative mention is a satirical echo that is up to the reader to infer.

There is one last use of satirical negation in Kincaid's vast array of negative formulations. In a most poetic passage at the end of the book, she attempts to describe the amazing *ex tempore* beauty of Antigua through affirmative predications of negative terms used to express inexpressible beauty:

> No real sunset could look like that; no real seawater could strike that many shades of blue at once; no real sky could be that shade of blue—another shade of blue, completely different from the shades of blue seen in the sea—and no real cloud could be that white and float just that way in that blue sky; no real day could be that sort of sunny and bright, making everything seem transparent and shallow; and no real night could be that sort of black, making everything seem thick and deep and bottomless. (77)

The hyperbolic aesthetisation goes on until, through a stylistic fade out, the unreality of the beauty morphs into the unreality of its exact opposite. This is where poetry gets satirical overtones: "no real grass is that particular shade of dilapidated, rundown green (not enough rain); no real cows look that poorly as they feed on the unreal-looking grass in the unreal-looking pasture, and no real cows look that miserable as some unreal-looking egrets sit on their backs eating insects" (78). The aesthetization of such poverty becomes indecent: Kincaid forces us to swing from one extreme polarity to the other in the same stylistic breath, making us perceive the Antiguan poverty in an acute way.

2.2. The confiscation of debate and the paradox of negation

In *A Small Place*, negation does not always have the indirectness we have just underlined. It also serves the primordial function of denying the truth of a statement. Kincaid resorts to negation to declare that the terms of the debate she raises are not debatable: "all masters of every stripe are rubbish, and all slaves of every stripe are noble and exalted, there can be no question about this" (80). Here are the unchangeable premises from which all conclusions must follow. She confiscates the possibility of negating her negative statements. She makes "metalinguistic negation" [19] impossible: it cannot be asserted in any other terms, according to her, because it does not belong to the realm of assertability but to the realm of truth. Kincaid transforms her assertions into facts, thus frustrating any potential counter-argument. In the following nominalisations which are lexically incorporated negations, "the irrevocableness of their bad deeds" (23-24), "for not only did we have to suffer the unspeakableness of slavery" (10), she seems to set in (nominalized) stone the harm that was done and that cannot be erased[20]. There can be no positive rectification to what happened:

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[19] Metalinguistic negation is defined as "a means for objecting to a previous utterance". Laurence R. Horn draws here from Oswald Ducrot's distinction between a descriptive negation ("a comment on fact", preserving presuppositions) and metalinguistic/polemic negation ("a comment on utterances", challenging presuppositions) (Horn 1985, 38).

[20] Metalinguistic negation is impossible on negations that are lexically incorporated: if one can say "I'm not happy, I'm ecstatic", one cannot perform the same metalinguistic reanalysis with morphologically

> But nothing can erase my rage—not an apology, not a large sum of money, not the death of the criminal—for this wrong can never be made right, and only the impossible can make me still: can a way be found to make what happened not have happened? (32)

There can be no crossing back to positivity: what remains to live with is perpetual loss and mourning[21].

Kincaid's use of negation seems paradoxically to evoke and reinforce the positive polarity that serves as the point of reference in *A Small Place*: through negation, she reveals that the norms with which she assesses the state of Antigua are those of western culture:

> They have nothing to compare this incredible constant with, no big historical moment to compare the way they are now to the way they used to be. No industrial Revolution, no revolution of any kind, no Age of anything, no world wars, no decades of turbulence balanced by decades of calm. Nothing, then, natural or unnatural, to leave a mark on their character. It is just a little island. (80)

As Simpson puts it, the negative is a marked form and yet it "seems to be stalked, as it were, by the shadow of a positive polarity" (Simpson 2003, 139)[22]. Here Kincaid's negations seem to be overshadowed by the positive polarity embodied by western references. The reading grid through which she evaluates Antigua's present is of English conception. In doing so, Kincaid may be illustrating the fact that she is condemned to speak and see through the language of the criminal.

Conclusion

However, the writer stylistically demonstrates that she is not the passive and captive victim of a language. She uses pragmatic weapons against the English tongue, minorising it from within[23], namely through the eroding work of negation and the subtle play with deixis. Kincaid does not incorporate West Indian broken English as a form of linguistic resistance to the major language (for Kincaid this is "the English", she writes in one of her novels, "that instantly reveals the humiliation of history, the humiliation of the past not remade into art" [My Brother 108]) but she manages to create different viewpoints from which to reassess naturalized certitudes. In the shadow of the (positive) standard language, Kincaid imparts on English a renewed forceful character that can hardly leave the white western reader indifferent.

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incorporated negations: "I'm unhappy, I'm ecstatic" (Carston 1998, 335). In Kincaid's text, the nominalisations make any reanalysis impossible.

[21] Here lies maybe a form of life that has a certain positivity to it. We may talk of a depathologizing form of negation as Soto-Crespo, drawing on Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, speaks of depathologized mourning as regards Kincaid's work: "for this diaspora writer, mourning is not a psychological stage that must be overcome; rather mourning is the culturally normative yet highly political strategy through which a diaspora writer makes transcultural connections" (Soto-Crespo 2002, 371).

[22] In cognitive stylistics (*Text World Theory*), negation constitutes a subworld disrupting the parameters of the matrix world (see Hidalgo-Downing 2000, Sorlin forthcoming). Antiguans's negated world can here be said to be subordinated to the parameters of the English western world.

[23] Kincaid's repetitive style and mesmerizing orality would deserve a whole paper (see Simmons 1994 for instance).

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